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SUBJECT: PSI: VIETNAM PARTICIPATES IN OUTREACH FORUM

¶1. (SBU) On April 25, Poloff met with MFA International Organizations Department officer Nguyen Thi Van Anh to obtain a readout on her attendance at the PSI Outreach Forum held in Auckland on March 29. (Note: Anh had been traveling until only recently. End Note.) The focus of the forum was to provide information on the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and clarification of what membership in it entails. Anh said the forum covered operational, legal, capacity-building and intelligence-sharing issues, as well as the risk of WMD in the Asia-Pacific region and the contribution of PSI to regional and global security. The half-day format did not allow time to explore these issues in detail, she noted.

¶2. (SBU) Forum topics of particular interest were the challenges PSI implementation poses for a developing country, such as the ability to mobilize resources quickly when called upon to interdict and the lack of sufficient technical capability in the form of equipment and analytical laboratories. Although the information presented at the forum "was not new," Anh valued the opportunity to see how various countries assess PSI from their different perspectives. She did not indicate any new Vietnamese thinking on issues that the GVN says hinder its PSI endorsement, such as questions about the initiative's compliance with the requirements of domestic and international law. Concerning next steps, she observed that countries have different concerns related to PSI participation and questioned whether there is one approach that could apply to all prospective PSI participants.

¶3. (SBU) According to Jeremy Clarke-Watson, the New Zealand Embassy DCM in Hanoi, Anh was reportedly an active participant at the forum, asking a number of questions mainly about the implications for developing countries of compliance with PSI. She was apparently the only participant from Southeast Asia to speak or ask anything.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: Sending a representative to this PSI event was a first for the GVN. While there has been no change as yet in GVN policy with regard to PSI, the GVN often states that it remains committed to nonproliferation cooperation on a case-by-case basis. This approach was confirmed in the November 2006 Presidential Joint Statement in which Presidents Bush and Triet "pledged to increase cooperation to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related technology and materials in accordance with international and national laws and each country's capacities," a line that MFA interlocutors have noted was drawn from PSI's Statement of Interdiction Principles. End comment.

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